

November 29, 2007 - Murtha Comments on President Bush's Readiness and War Funding Remarks

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(Washington D.C.)- Congressman John P. Murtha, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, released the following comments today following President Bush's remarks concerning the readiness of our armed forces.

"In one year, Congress has appropriated over \$1 trillion to the Department of Defense, including \$471 billion that was signed into law earlier this month. We are spending \$14 billion every month on this war.

"After two years of Congressional Democrats warning about the declining readiness of our military, the President appears to finally be taking an interest. In the past year alone, Democrats added over \$25 billion to improve the readiness of military units here at home, funds not requested by the President.

"Unfortunately, when Congress presented the President with a bipartisan plan to improve military readiness, he resisted and fought our efforts to add readiness funding and requirements. Specifically, he vetoed a funding bill that would have considerably improved readiness by requiring that all troops being sent to Iraq are fully trained and equipped; that their deployment time in theater is limited; and that they are provided with sufficient rest and recuperation between deployments.

"Our nation's military readiness suffers because of the President's open-ended policy in Iraq. The best way to improve our military readiness is for the President to provide our military and nation with a responsible plan for transitioning our forces in Iraq and bringing them home.

"By threatening to close military child care centers and counseling services, the President is using our military families as a wedge. These kinds of comments and threats do nothing to move the debate forward. The President should do what Americans want him to do, present to Congress and the American

people a bipartisan plan that brings our troops home."

Facts about Readiness:

- In 2001, all active duty Army divisions were rated at the highest readiness levels. They were fully manned, equipped, and trained. Only some reserve units were not ready to go to war.
- Since the beginning of the Iraq war, the readiness of our forces (both active and reserves) has plummeted. In fact, Army military readiness (ground forces) has declined to levels not seen since the end of the Vietnam War.
- The vast majority of our active duty Army units at home are critically short of equipment and personnel, causing them to be rated at the lowest readiness levels. Moreover, there is NOT ONE Army National Guard combat unit meeting the readiness level. These units are either preparing to go to Iraq or serve as our forces held in reserve to fight another conflict.
- The Abu Ghraib scandal is an example of what can happen when a deployed unit is not trained properly to and meet its mission. In this case, the unit did not have enough number of trained personnel.
- Ultimately, under-manned, under-equipped, or under-trained units are likely to experience higher casualty and accident rates in theater. This will be even more likely to occur if units are required to deploy to the theater with less than one year at home, or are kept in theater longer than one year, having lost their combat edge.
- The policies of this Administration and its mismanagement of the war in Iraq have led to an erosion of the United States readiness for war.

- This erosion has resulted from continuing high troop deployments to Iraq, chronic equipment and personnel shortages, and funding constraints - all problems caused by this Administration's policies.

- The FY08 Defense Appropriations Bill fully funds home-station training, equipment maintenance, and other key military readiness programs covered in these accounts.

- In the May 2007 War Funding Supplemental, Democrats added \$2 billion (not requested by the President) to improve the readiness of units here at home, including the National Guard.

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